

SOUTHWEST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER FIRST QUARTER REPORT-FY 2005

For the period October 1 - December 31, 2004

- 1. Submitted by:** Gary Sakagawa, Assistant Center Director For Fishery Management Programs
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- 2. Title of Accomplishment or Milestone:** 19th North Pacific Albacore Workshop (NPAW)
- 3. Current Status:** Task completed on schedule
- 4. Background Information:** The NPAW was established in 1974 for the purpose of promoting and accelerating joint research on North Pacific albacore among interested parties. It sponsors regular meetings for researchers to report on research activities, exchange data, coordinate large-scale research projects and conduct stock assessments. At its 18th meeting in 2002, the participants agreed to accelerate research towards performing a significant stock assessment at the 19th Workshop in 2004. The 19th Workshop was held in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada from November 25 to December 2, 2004 and was hosted by the Pacific Biological Station of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canada).
- 5. Purpose of Activity:** The SWFSC is a principal party to the NPAW agreement and participates in planning and execution of Workshop projects and meetings. Because the albacore fisheries have recently produced a high level of catch and many more boats are involved than before, the stock is thought to be heavily fished. Planning for the 19th Workshop was with the objective to determine to what extent the stock is being fished and whether the stock is capable to sustaining the high level of catch in the future.
- 6. Description of Accomplishment and Significant Results:** Participants from research organizations in Canada, Japan, Mexico, Taiwan, the U.S., the IATTC and SPC met from November 25 through December 2. They reviewed fishery developments, results from research assignments, available data and stock assessment models appropriate for the available data. The stock assessment model of choice was the VPA model and executed with the VPA-2BOX software. Participants reviewed data and information for input parameters for this model, made choices for input values, reviewed results of model runs and made adjustments to model variables. Several iterations of this process were conducted. Final results indicated that the stock is being heavily exploited with current (2003) F at about 0.43. All estimates of biomass parameters are currently high and well above levels for the late 1980s when biomass was low and the fisheries collapsed. Stock biomass projections indicate that with high recruitment to the stock, similar to levels observed in recent years (1999-2003), the current catch is sustainable. If recruitment retreats to the lower level observed in 1975-1989, the current catch is not sustainable.
- 7. Significance of Accomplishment:** The Workshop met its objective of performing a significant stock assessment with available data up to 2004. The Workshop results also provide a basis for framing management advice.

8. Problems: None

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